

Minutes of Faculty Senate Meeting

September 14, 2016

*Submitted by Senate Secretary, Claudia Karloff, Professor of English
Prepared by Amalia Wagner and Claudia Kairoff, Ph.D.*

Caveat: Comments recorded are not necessarily verbatim. In order to facilitate open discussion, the identity of most Senators making comments or questions is not recorded. The identity of comments from Senate Officers and Senate Ad Hoc and Standing Committee Chairs are given, as is the identity of persons commenting in their official administrative capacity (e.g., CFO, Provost and College Dean.)

In attendance: Jane Albrecht, Susan Borwick, Simone Caron, Stewart Carter, Arjun Chatterjee, James Cotter, Larry Daniel, Will Fleeson, James Ford, Amy Hildreth, Claudia Kairoff, Molly Keener, Ralph Kennedy, Rogan Kersh, Christopher Knott, Mark Knudson, Nina Lucas, Wilson Parker, John Pickel, Tim Pyatt, Sarah Raynor, Stephen Robinson, Kathy Smith, Beverly Snively, Michelle Steward, Rosalind Tedford, Lisa Washburn, Julie Wayne, Jeff Weiner, Mark Welker, Page West.

There were 30 voting eligible Senators present, a quorum.

Welcome

President Cotter called the meeting to order. A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes of the April 27, 2016 senate meeting. Approval by a show of hands was unanimous in favor of approval.

Provost Kersh introduced guest Karrie Dixon, American Council on Education (ACE) Fellow for 2016-17. Karrie will spend one week per month on campus for the purpose of “getting a taste of everything that goes on at a private university.” As an ACE Fellow Karrie was required to sign a non-disclosure agreement. She is originally from Winston Salem NC. Karrie earned her undergraduate degree at NC State, obtained her Masters in Education at UNCG and then returned to NC State for her PhD. Karrie Dixon is an administrator with the University of North Carolina system. If any of you are interested in meeting with her, you may contact her directly or Sam Perrotta.

Transparency and Inclusion:

President Cotter expressed his mission for the year. He feels very passionate about transparency and inclusion. He feels that the faculty is much more engaged than it used to be in how the university works and is more involved in what the university does. The main focus for the Faculty Senate is to represent the faculty. This organization needs everyone to participate; it needs Senators who want to be engaged. President Cotter wants the Faculty Senate to be the organization that finds out information and, through the senators, communicates with our constituents. In addition, he wants senators to find out faculty concerns and bring them to the Faculty Senate. Our mission is to take what is important to our body to the administration and be a vibrant part of the university. He cited an example of when Mark Peterson was hired without any input from the Senate in comparison with when Rogan was hired and the faculty senate was

part of the process. This is an example of how things are done today relative to how things were done in the past.

Wake Forest Priorities, according to you:

President Cotter shared his experience from a recent meeting with the Administrative Council. During the meeting they participated in a group exercise where they were given 20 minutes to discuss and report out two near-term priorities for the university. He was surprised by the resulting priorities and feels that the perspective of the faculty is different from that of the Administrative Council.

He broke up the faculty senators into 6 groups and gave them 20 minutes to discuss what they feel as a group are two or three near-term priorities for the university to focus on.

Below are the priorities that emerged across tables by Faculty Senators:

- Dissociate from Koch brothers; their funding is not advancing the university mission in the academic world.
- The Teaching Professional ranks might be an issue and possibly undermine tenure.
- Keep an eye on Innovation Quarter.
- Improve social environment on campus for visible minorities and academically talented students transferring out due to not being satisfied with that aspect of campus.
- Investment in faculty time and programmatic development rather than in things that benefit our cash flow. Invest in things from a conceptual perspective, asking of each proposal, is this a valuable activity for prioritizing?
- Non-Tenure track faculty. How will they fit in the future?
- Inclusivity, Campus Climate, and learning environment.
- Funding in a broad way: transparency and sources of funding, and how funding raised is distributed among the units in the university.
- Faculty morale due to mixture of tenure and non-tenure track positions. Adjuncts having an impact on teaching in the college.
- Decisions being made for financial not academic priorities. Where do revenues go that prevent faculty support? There should be more transparency about that.
- Continue Diversity and Inclusion mission. Have activities that support diversity and inclusion.
- A feeling that student-faculty engagement is not as important as it used to be or should be.
- Protect the teacher/scholar model with emphasis on the scholar side. Engage with students in scholarly activities.
- Keeping academic reputation of the faculty high.
- Student well-being and mental health.
- Aging academic building infrastructure.

President Cotter passed out the results from the Administrative Council priorities exercise (not an “official” University policy statement, but rather an exercise among a group of senior WFU

leaders). They are listed below. He mentioned the similarity between the two groups regarding Innovation Quarter and campus climate.

The three priorities for coming months that emerged across tables:

1. “Wake Downtown” (Innovation Quarter), in terms of launching academic programs, evaluating proposed new ones, coordinating with Medical School colleagues, working with local community leaders, etc.
2. Campus Climate: continued focus on ways in which all our students (and faculty/staff) are-- and aren't--feeling genuinely included in the campus community.
3. New ERP (Workday) implementation: self-explanatory! (to administrators)

Running through all tables was another shared priority: on the continued progress of the capital campaign, with particular attention to ways this is manifestly enhancing teaching/learning, faculty research/creative work, and the student experience.

Finally, one table focused exclusively on improving our Greek system's management/inclusiveness/social practices.

Update on Faculty Handbook Revisions, Sarah Raynor

Professor Raynor explained that the Dean of the College office asked the collegiate senators to look at the college chapter of the faculty handbook to make sure it accurately reflects current practices and procedures. For example, there are bylaw changes and tenure and promotion changes that are not reflected in the handbook. The collegiate senators are currently working on this project for the college. She mentioned that Vice Provost Sutton is spearheading updates in other units.

Faculty Climate Survey on Teaching Evaluations (unlike the HERI survey)

President Cotter expressed that many of us feel that the evaluations of teaching are not what they should be. He would like to conduct a climate survey on what the faculty feel about the teaching evaluation process and how it is used.

Discussion:

Comment: The college faculty had a committee on this topic not too long ago. It might be helpful to get information from them.

Q: I'm not clear what evaluations you are talking about?

A: Student evaluations of teaching.

Comment: For new Senators that were unable to attend the earlier meeting today, please get a copy of the by-laws from President Cotter. Also, existing Senators should review the by-laws on the website. One of the things in the by-laws is that the President can create a subcommittee. Is this how you envision this being done? If so, you might want to invite people to contact you.

President Cotter will send out an email to find out the level of interest on the topic of teaching evaluations.

Comment: James and I have talked about this in the past. In the School of Business teaching evaluations are used as a punitive measure; they rank professors based on how positive their evaluations are. I think dialogue about this would be helpful, because it seems that in other units, evaluations are not used as punitively as in the School of Business.

Comment: I think the college had a college faculty committee that viewed this on a large scale; how student and peer evaluations fit in and what the best practices are. I think there is a lot of data there that could be shared.

Comment: I think Catherine Ross from The Teaching and Learning Center is an expert on this.

President Cotter said he has spoken with Catherine about this and she indicated that she was not interested in participating.

Sense of the Faculty Senate on changes in the retirement plan (opt in/out)

President Cotter serves on the University Retirement Plan Committee and asked for feedback from the Faculty Senators on the recent changes to the retirement plan. He posed the questions below.

1. Did you have any problems with the transfer of your funds?
2. What do you think about the new policy in which employees hired on 7/1/16 are automatically being enrolled in the retirement plan at 5% of their base salary?

Additionally, he mentioned that the committee is considering changing the existing policy so that current employees who are not contributing any of their own money will automatically opt in at 5% of their base salary. Currently, only 39% of faculty and staff contribute their own money to the retirement plan. If this policy goes into effect, F/S can still opt out of the plan.

Discussion ensued:

Comment: We didn't have any problem with the transfer, but we did have a charge on our account that we were able to get reversed after contacting the administrator.

Comment: My issue was with the fact that the university was able to move my contributions and I didn't have any say until after the fact.

Mark Welker, who serves on the University Retirement Plan Committee, asked the faculty senate what they think about the possibility of changing the policy for existing employees to the opt out plan and making them contribute 5% of their base salary, effective July 1, 2017.

Discussion ensued:

Comment: I feel like this change would be disruptive to existing employees' budgets.

Comment: I like Mark's suggestion but think education is an important part of the process. If we can show how the pre-tax contribution doesn't affect their bottom line as much as they think, then it might be better accepted.

Comment: I agree with the idea, but it might be a hardship for folks that make only \$15.00 an hour.

Comment: I agree with the idea but want to express the importance of communication. We have a little bit of experience from when the benefit audit was conducted. People were asked for documentation, and if not presented by a certain time, they were no longer eligible for benefits. Some people might not pay attention and may not realize they are being put in the system for automatic deductions. The way we are right now, people can opt in, and it is their choice to participate.

Comment: How many new employees are subject to this opt in plan? Can HR or department managers sit down and discuss the options with each employee? The presumption is that we know better than she or he what is good for that individual and are going to make the decision on their behalf.

President Cotter explained that the committee has a fiduciary responsibility to do what is best for the employees and that is why they narrowed the investment options and are considering this change for existing employees.

Comment: Behavioral decision making would predict in advance what is going to happen if people maintain the status quo. If you opt them in, the majority will stay in, and if you allow them to opt out, the majority will stay opted out. We can also predict people's reaction to change that is being made for them. People value autonomy, and so I think there is a potential risk that you need to balance with your fiduciary duty. The assumption is that we are helping people to be

more financially secure, long-term, but the fact that it's going to be a change for them could create a negative reaction along with the financial implications.

Comment: Mark Welker wanted to get a sense about how much we should worry about that, compared to the good that you know you are doing for the employees by this change.

Comment: I think the form of communication is going to be very important. When I brought up the changes to the retirement plan at a faculty meeting, one of my colleagues said they threw the correspondence from TIAA in the trash.

Comment: This is an opportunity for education, a great time to serve our employees by explaining the benefits rather than forcing them.

Comment: I tend to believe that people are intelligent, and with proper information up-front, they can make decisions that are best for themselves. If we value diversity on this campus, we should value different points of view and honor that.

President Cotter moved to the next item on the agenda. He asked all Senators to complete and return the form on the table with their committee preferences.

He adjourned the meeting at 5:35pm.